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Thematic issue before the Commission: The role of men and boys in achieving gender equality

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report provides an overview of the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality. It focuses on socialization and education; the labour market and the workplace; the sharing of family responsibilities, including caring roles; and the prevention of HIV/AIDS. The report concludes with a series of recommendations for consideration by the Commission.

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I. Introduction

1. In accordance with the multi-year programme of work for 2002-2006 adopted by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2001/4 of 24 July 2001, the Commission on the Status of Women will review the theme "The role of men and boys in achieving gender equality" at its forty-eighth session in March 2004. The outcome of the Commission's deliberations will contribute to a global policy framework and lead to concrete action to facilitate a greater role for men and boys in furthering gender equality.

2. Over the past decade, States Members of the United Nations have emphasized the importance of the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality. In the Beijing Declaration (1995), Governments called upon men to participate fully in all actions towards gender equality and emphasized that equal sharing of responsibilities and a harmonious partnership between women and men were critical to their well-being and that of their families, as well as to the consolidation of democracy. The Beijing Platform for Action emphasized the principle of shared power and responsibility between women and men at home, in the workplace and in the wider national and international communities, as well as the principle of equality of women and men as integral to the socialization process. It stressed that gender equality could only be achieved when men and women worked together in partnerships. Specific recommendations focused on promoting harmonization of work and family responsibilities for men and women; encouraging men to share equally in childcare and household work; and promoting programmes to educate and enable men to assume their responsibilities to prevent HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

3. The Platform for Action stated: "Equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and is also a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace. A transformed partnership based on equality between women and men is a condition for people-centred sustainable development."[1]

4. Those recommendations were reinforced at subsequent sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women. The agreed conclusions on child and dependent care, including sharing work and family responsibilities, adopted at the fortieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women,[2] highlighted that greater participation of men in family responsibilities, including domestic work and child and dependent care, would contribute to the welfare of children, women and men themselves.

5. The outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, adopted in 2000,[3] identified a number of obstacles to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. These included persistent gender stereotyping, which had led to insufficient encouragement for men to reconcile professional and family responsibilities, and insufficient sharing of tasks and responsibilities by men for caregiving within families, households and communities; unequal power relationships between women and men, in which women often did not have the power to insist on safe and responsible sex practices; and lack of communication and understanding between men and women on women's health needs.

6. The role of men and boys has also been addressed in other intergovernmental forums, including the International Conference on Population and Development,

held in Cairo in 1994; the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in 1995; the twenty-sixth special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS, held in New York in 2001; and the twenty-seventh United Nations General Assembly special session on children, held in New York in 2002. Those conferences highlighted the roles of men and boys in, inter alia, sharing family and household responsibilities; sexual and reproductive health; and the HIV/AIDS pandemic.[4]

7. The Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, adopted in 1994, stated:

> "Special efforts should be made to emphasize men's shared responsibility and promote their active involvement in responsible parenthood, sexual and reproductive behaviour, including family planning; prenatal, maternal and child health; prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV; prevention of unwanted and high-risk pregnancies; shared control and contribution to family income, children's education, health and nutrition; and recognition and promotion of the equal value of children of both sexes. Male responsibilities in family life must be included in the education of children from the earliest ages. Special emphasis should be placed on the prevention of violence against women and children."[5]

8. To contribute to a further understanding of the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality, the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs convened an expert group meeting in Brasilia from 21 to 24 October 2003, in collaboration with the International Labour Office (ILO), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).[6] An online discussion, convened by the Division from 30 June to 25 July 2003, also contributed information to support deliberations in the Commission on the Status of Women.

9. The present report provides an overview of the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality. It focuses on the socialization and education of boys and young men; the labour market and the workplace; the sharing of family responsibilities; care and support of older, disabled and sick persons, including those infected or affected by HIV/AIDS; and the prevention of HIV/AIDS.

II. The role of men and boys in achieving gender equality

A. Emergence of attention to the role of men and boys

10. Over the past decade the important role that men and boys can play in empowering women and achieving gender equality in the home, the community, the labour market and the workplace has become increasingly recognized. A growing body of research related to men and gender equality, addressing men's gender identities[7] and practices, has emerged. Academic journals have been established, research conferences have been held, and there is a rapidly growing international literature on the topic of men, masculinities and gender equality.

11. The attention to the role of men and boys in relation to gender equality has emerged from the significant gains made as a result of the international community's emphasis on the advancement of women. It has also been facilitated by the shift

from a focus on women to a broader focus on gender roles and the relations between women and men.

12. Achieving gender equality is recognized as a societal responsibility that concerns and should fully engage men as well as women and requires partnerships between women and men. There is a growing interest among Governments, academia, practitioners, non-governmental organizations and the private sector in the role of men and boys in promoting gender equality.

13. Men's support for gender equality has taken a variety of forms, including advocacy, alliances and campaigns, and educational programmes for young men. Projects and programmes related to working with men and boys have been implemented by institutions ranging from Governments and large international organizations to small community-based groups. Networks of men against gender-based violence have, for example, been developed in many countries and men's groups and networks are challenging existing stereotypes and addressing men's roles and responsibilities in sexual relationships, as well as in the promotion of gender equality.[8]

14. Men and boys have much to gain from increased gender equality, as they pay significant costs in terms of quality of life from the way gender relations are currently defined and practised. In many contexts men may feel oppressed by the need to be competitive and ambitious, to avoid talking about their emotions, and to spend much time away from home while their children are growing up.[9] Men are likely to benefit from broad social and cultural changes associated with gender equality. Less rigid stereotyping of masculinity can increase options for men and yield benefits in mental health and psychological well-being for men and boys. A move towards gender equality is likely to improve overall social inclusion, with benefits for men and boys as well as women and girls.[10]

15. Men should lead the change process towards gender equality by fostering increased understanding of the gains for themselves as individuals and as a group, as well as the gains for society. This requires identifying the constraints they face as men under the current definitions of masculinity in different contexts. Such change processes can be most effectively promoted when focused on men who are already committed to gender equality or who are open to change, for example, young men who are less firmly entrenched in their attitudes and behaviour. Such men can offer positive role models to other men and boys and provide opportunities for shifting away from the less positive aspects of dominant versions of masculinity.

16. Efforts to work with men and boys must be placed in the overall context of the promotion of gender equality. Increased support to men and boys should not mean a reduction of the necessary support to women and girls.[11]

B. Socialization and education of boys and young men

17. A better understanding of prevailing gender stereotypes and expectations about men's roles and responsibilities, and how they influence male attitudes and behaviour, as well as the ways in which boys are socialized to become men, is required for effective policies and actions on increased roles for men and boys in achieving gender equality. The way boys are socialized determines the way in which they will, as young men and adults, relate to women, to men and to gender equality.

Research has shown that changes in socialization processes should begin at an early age when values and attitudes that shape identities as women and men are being formed.[12]

18. Both mothers and fathers have a responsibility for setting examples of behaviour that promote gender equality in raising and educating boys. Boys and girls who grow up in families without strictly enforced stereotypical gender roles, that is, where the father is involved in caring for children and in domestic tasks, and the mother provides economically for households and/or holds leadership positions in the workplace or community, are more likely to be flexible in their perceptions of the roles of men and women. On the other hand, boys who observe fathers and other men treating women as inferior or being violent towards women may believe that this is "normal" male behaviour and view subordinating and undervaluing women as a mark of masculinity. Gender-based violence, which occurs across all social, economic and cultural settings, is strongly influenced by the socialization of boys and men.[13]

19. Child development is, however, complex and there are many forces for change. Other actors in society influence children's perception of ways of being a man or a woman, in addition to parents and other close relatives. These include friends and peers, schools, youth clubs and sport groups, the mass media and male-dominated groups such as the police and armed forces.

20. Across the life cycle, friends and peer groups play a significant role in defining what makes a "real" man. Masculinity is understood in many contexts as being stoic, self-reliant, tough, brave, vigorous, daring and aggressive, and in many countries men are taught that to be competitive and aggressive is "manly". In such contexts boys can be ridiculed if they show interest in caring for younger siblings, cooking or other domestic tasks, have close friendships with girls or display their emotions.

21. There is, however, significant diversity among men, shaped by local contexts and cultures, and many men act in responsible and caring ways. Men have attitudes and capacities that can be utilized to positively influence gender relations and end violence against women. While some male peer groups reinforce traditional and sexist norms, there are also male peer groups that actively promote alternative, more gender-equitable attitudes and behaviour.[14]

22. One powerful force for change is the education system, which can influence gender equality in both positive and negative ways. Schools can be important sites for positive learning about gender equality and can facilitate a shift towards a culture based on gender equality.[15] Gender-sensitive curricula, classroom discussions on gender equality, teacher education that promotes positive role models, and sensitization of school administrators and parents are critical in promoting greater contribution of men and boys to gender equality. School environments can, however, also contribute to perpetuating gender stereotypes through biases in school curricula and materials as well as teachers' attitudes and behaviour.[16]

23. Mass media, particularly advertisements that target children and youth, can play a powerful role in providing exposure to positive gender roles, or alternatively can perpetuate or exacerbate gender stereotypes. In many countries the Internet is an important space for youth socialization, which can have a negative impact, but could also be more effectively harnessed for positive change. Sports groups, while often

promoting positive aspects of teamwork, may contribute to competitive and aggressive forms of masculinity. In many parts of the world, the police and the armed forces reinforce notions of aggressive forms of masculinity associated with violence, but could also be an important venue for gender-sensitive education for men.[17] A challenge is to develop the spaces where men frequently interact as sources of more positive gender-sensitive attitudes and models of behaviour.[18]

C. Men as agents of change in the labour market and in the workplace

24. In relation to the world of work, men have an important role in promoting women's economic rights and independence, including access to employment, appropriate working conditions, control of economic resources and full participation in decision-making.

25. Securing work and earning an income is considered essential in most societies for acquiring the status of male adulthood and social recognition, and is a prerequisite for establishing a family.[19] Changes in the gender division of labour, as well as increasing unemployment, may pose challenges for men in terms of their masculine identity. Given the cultural acceptance of the role of men as the breadwinner in some contexts, the limited prospects of employment for young men may be devastating to their sense of self-worth. Unemployment and work insecurity impact negatively on the social and mental well-being of men and boys and can lead to increased violence against women.

26. In recent decades women have increasingly entered the formal labour market and have taken on more economic responsibilities. Women also predominate in the informal sector in many countries. In most parts of the world the labour market is characterized by gender inequalities in terms of wage differences and occupational segregation. At the global level, approximately 50 per cent of workers are in sex-stereotyped occupations, as a result of stereotypes and inequalities in education and training.[20] In many parts of the world, families are dependent on women's as well as men's earnings. Men have had to adjust to changes in the previously clear division of labour and responsibilities and the resulting changes in relations within the family.

27. The workplace is an arena where men can actively promote gender equality. Men can play a significant role in combating sexual harassment, particularly in contexts where such behaviour is accepted by men as normal [21] The workplace can, however, also be a major site of inequality and discrimination against women, mirroring and sometimes exacerbating existing stereotypes on the roles and contributions of women and men. Shifts in organizational culture to more positive gender relations require changes in attitudes and behaviour of both men and women at the individual level.[22] Bringing about positive change in corporations and organizations with deeply entrenched cultures of male privilege requires strong leadership from senior management levels in both the private and the public sector, where men predominantly hold organizational power. Using managerial authority and capacity for initiative is one of the most immediately available ways for men to promote workplace gender equality. Male leaders in government institutions, the corporate sector, trade unions and non-governmental organizations can provide

positive role models on gender equality by introducing fair employment practices, anti-discrimination measures and gender-inclusive decision-making.

D. Opportunities and challenges in sharing family responsibilities

28. More equitable sharing of domestic responsibilities has been highlighted as critical for ensuring the participation of women in political processes and increased access to education and training, as well as employment and income-generating opportunities. While women's access to employment has increased in many countries, in most cases men have not proportionately increased their share of domestic responsibilities. Regardless of the extent of women's involvement in paid work, they often shoulder the main responsibilities for domestic work and childcare, and care for older, disabled and sick family members. This situation has been exacerbated by the increased numbers of older persons needing care, as well as increases in working hours in some sectors, which have created greater conflicts between work and family life.

29. Frequent travel, relocation to different cities or countries, and new technologies, such as e-mail, have extended work hours and have worsened the balance between work and home life. Globalization, restructuring and downsizing have created life paths that require long hours in the workplace and have increased gender segregation in the family. In many contexts, fathers are only able to dedicate the limited time and space "allowed" by their work commitments to their families.[23]

30. There is wide recognition of the need to increase the participation of men in domestic work and family responsibilities by adopting family support policies and encouraging the reconciliation of family and working life for both men and women. Men as well as women suffer negative consequences from work/life imbalances and have much to gain from better contact with children and participation in family life.

31. By expanding the role of men to include caring for children, the more narrow definitions of masculinity can be replaced with a broader vision of the human capacity of men in family life and society in general. This requires removing the institutional and cultural barriers that currently make it difficult for men to fully engage as fathers, and by promoting policies and practices that allow for shared care. Actions required to establish an enabling environment for women and men to share these responsibilities include closing the gender pay gap and ensuring that family-friendly measures, including parental leave, part-time employment and flexible working hours, are available to both women and men.

32. Closing the pay gap between men and women is critical because wage levels can have a significant impact on family decisions regarding who undertakes care activities, particularly in low-income families. In situations where women earn less than men, it makes economic sense for the mother rather than the father to take time off from paid work or shorten their hours in order to care for their children and manage the home. Fathers may instead have to work longer hours to compensate for the loss of earnings of mothers. Reducing the gender pay gap would enable men to be more closely involved with the care of their children.[24]

33. A parental leave system open to both parents would also assist in providing incentives to fathers to stay home with their children. Sensitization of both men and women on the importance of men's greater involvement in the care of children and

domestic work may be necessary. Some countries have adopted parental leave systems in which part of the leave is only available to fathers in order to encourage greater involvement of men. Policy changes in some countries with respect to the presence of fathers at childbirth have allowed men to establish early contact with their newborns.[25]

34. It is important that men receive support from women when they assume their parental responsibilities. Studies show that the more men feel supported in the parental role, the more they tend to stay involved in the care of their children.[26] Vicious cycles can, however, develop in which men are presumed incompetent, accept that verdict and neither seek nor are given a chance to overcome their presumed incompetence. Education programmes for fathers can facilitate men's involvement in and greater responsibility for household duties and childcare.[27]

35. The emergence of family-friendly or flexible employment policies and practices in some countries is a mark of recognition, by employers and Governments, of the importance of work/home relationships. Greater availability and acceptability of part-time work, increased work flexibility in traditionally male jobs and higher compensation paid by employers for work carried out after working hours are measures that have proved to be successful in involving men in family responsibilities.[28]

36. Research has shown that the value-added for men of increased involvement in families includes better bonding and better relationships with children, leading to greater emotional maturity in men and more enjoyment of life; improved relationships between women and men; and a less burdensome and more relaxed concept of manliness, resulting in less need for emotional control.[29]

E. Promoting greater involvement of men and boys in caregiving

37. Caring roles in relation to older, sick and disabled family members have become important issues on the work/home agenda worldwide. HIV/AIDS has increased the focus on caring roles. In order to define specific policies and measures at the national level, taking into account local cultures and practices, the current involvement of men and boys in care and domestic work should be documented.

38. In countries with weak health infrastructure, the responsibility of care commonly falls on the family, and primarily on women and girls. This increases the workload of women and girls and reduces their employment, income-generating and educational opportunities.

39. Migration and urbanization have left many older women in rural areas with the responsibility of caring for their grandchildren and the sick and disabled. In recent years, the impact of HIV/AIDS has exacerbated this situation in many countries. In some countries virtually an entire generation has been lost to the disease and older women are now caring for a generation of orphans. These women frequently become wage earners in order to support their grandchildren, leading to a double work burden.[30]

40. As the pandemic progresses and more people become seriously ill, the impact on women and girls becomes increasingly devastating. School-age girls are pulled out of school to take care of the sick and to assume household responsibilities previously carried out by their mothers or to find ways to supplement family

income. This can put them at greater risk of HIV infection. The workload borne by women, in both rural and urban areas, is enormous. Men could support increased access to HIV/AIDS treatment as a means of reducing the care and support work of women and girls.[31]

41. As a result of stereotypical perceptions, caring continues to be seen as a women's domain, both in the family and as a profession. Promoting increased involvement of men and boys in care and support for older, sick and disabled persons requires challenging stereotypical gender divisions of labour and gender roles as well as increasing the value and recognition given to caring roles.

42. While gender roles in care and support are gradually changing, there is still a gap between the expectation that men should play an increased role in the family and the way in which peers, colleagues and employers view this caregiving work. Many men still perceive care work as less suitable for men than for women, and men may feel that they would lose prestige by caring for dependent relatives. Men may have difficulties in performing these tasks due to stigma, lack of confidence and cultural barriers in performing "women's work".[32] Differences in the status of women and men lead to different costs for women and men in challenging the gender division of labour. While women who perform "men's work" may be admired, men in many contexts are more likely to lose status in taking on "women's work".[33]

43. Men may need support to perceive the sharing of domestic work, child-rearing and the care and support of older, disabled and sick persons as positive and in keeping with male identities, rather than as signs of weakness or failure as a man. Men in decision-making positions with personal experiences of caregiving could serve as role models for other men and boys and contribute to increasing corporate awareness, making it easier for male workers to take time off from work to care for older, disabled and sick family members.

44. Little has been done to explicitly encourage men to play more active roles in care and support activities and to provide them with the necessary skills to carry out this role, such as the ability to actively listen, cook, clean or provide basic medical attention. Boys and young men could be encouraged to pursue formal and informal education and training in the care sector.

F. Combating HIV/AIDS through the involvement of men and boys

45. The report of the expert group meeting on "The HIV/AIDS pandemic and its gender implications", organized by the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women in Namibia in 2000, concluded that inequality and women's disempowerment at different levels — in families, in decision-making at the community and other levels, in education, in employment and economic opportunities — can be linked to the rapid spread of HIV infection and the severe impacts on families, communities and countries.[34]

46. Until recently, population policies and demographic research focused almost exclusively on women as the target of contraception and reproductive health interventions, neglecting the role of men. Discussions on HIV/AIDS focused on women's vulnerability, while men were treated as the problem. Gradually, however, a more differentiated approach to men, emphasizing men and boys as part of the

solution, has emerged. This was illustrated by the 2000-2001 World AIDS Campaign, which proclaimed that "Men Make a Difference". An understanding of the role men play, and the role of relationships between women and men, is now increasingly informing the development of HIV/AIDS prevention strategies, including those relating to interventions such as mother-to-child transmission and violence against women.[35]

47. UNAIDS has recently established a Global Coalition on Women and AIDS, involving both the United Nations and non-governmental organizations. A global movement to mitigate the impact of AIDS on women's daily lives, the Coalition recognizes that sustained changes in the vulnerability of women and girls to HIV/AIDS will require fundamental shifts in the relationships between men and women and in the way societies view women and value their work and contributions. The Coalition emphasizes zero tolerance of violence against women, protection of the property and inheritance rights of women and girls, the importance of gender-sensitive messages regarding HIV prevention, the critical role of education, and attention to men and boys.

48. The spread of HIV and its progression to AIDS are significantly related to the unequal power relations between women and men.[36] Women and men's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS depends largely on behaviour patterns of both women and men, prevailing concepts of male and female identities, peer pressure, cultural practices and norms, modes of socialization, alcohol and drug abuse, hostile environments and violence.[37] Persistent stereotypes about masculinities and about what is appropriate and acceptable behaviour for women, particularly in relation to reproduction and sexuality, are also critical factors.[38]

49. Men's degree of susceptibility to HIV infection is determined by their specific circumstances. Work involving mobility — for example, the obligation to travel regularly and spend long periods away from spouses and partners (e.g., in transport, mining and the armed forces) may lead to use of sex as an escape. This is particularly true in the context of minimal job security, lack of control over life choices, and personal frustration and dissatisfaction. This in turn increases the risk of infection for their partners when they return home. Similarly, work in geographically isolated environments with limited social interaction and limited health facilities can involve risks, especially in single-sex working and living arrangements among men.[39]

50. Men's attitudes and behaviour can put them, as well as their partners, at risk.[40] Men's engagement in high-risk behaviour, including unsafe sex and intravenous or other drug use, may be viewed as a means to reflect an enhanced image of masculinity. Perceptions of men as tough and invulnerable also shape men's unwillingness or inability to seek help and treatment when their physical or emotional health is impaired. Such norms increase men's vulnerability to HIV and sexually transmitted infections and thus have a potentially damaging impact on women's health and well-being.[41]

51. Since major challenges in combating HIV/AIDS include the unequal power relations between women and men and the impact of societal attitudes towards men's and women's behaviour, promoting men's positive and responsible involvement in sexual and reproductive health is a key strategy for achieving gender equality. Without the active involvement of men and boys it will be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve the international goals and targets on HIV/AIDS. Men can

make important contributions to combating HIV/AIDS by striving for responsible, consenting sexual relations and by increased involvement during pregnancy, childbirth and child-rearing.

52. Addressing violence against women is a critical component in strategies to combat HIV/AIDS. Interventions have often focused on women and girls as the victims of violence, through, for example, shelters for women and children and rehabilitation programmes. Efforts need to move beyond addressing the symptoms and effects of violence to tackling the root causes. A focus on the structural causes of gender-based violence should involve a focus on men and boys and what drives them to violence. There is a particular need to target the needs of young boys for positive male role models in societies with "cultures of violence", crises of identity for men in rapidly changing societies and high prevalence of female-headed households. It is also important to change societal norms that make it acceptable for men to use violence against wives or intimate partners.

53. A number of measures to involve men and boys in combating HIV/AIDS have been identified, particularly addressing unequal power relations which are root causes of the spread of the pandemic. Peer education in schools and workplaces has proved to be an effective strategy for encouraging attitudinal and behavioural change.[42] It is also increasingly acknowledged that men can play a positive and active role in eliminating barriers to women's full participation in programmes designed to prevent mother-to-child transmission by supporting the access of HIV-positive pregnant women to safe clinics/hospitals and promoting formula feeding rather than breastfeeding by HIV-positive women.[43]

54. The media, theatre groups, videos, advice and information services and publications, including comics, are effective means for promoting more gender-equitable masculinities and reaching out to diverse groups of men and boys with varying educational and literacy levels in different settings. Campaigns that use a lifestyle social-marketing component and build on aspects of youth culture, such as music and dance, are particularly effective in reaching adolescent boys and young men.[44]

55. It is important to encourage greater dialogue on sensitive issues surrounding HIV/AIDS. Open discussion between women and men and girls and boys in schools, communities and workplaces on HIV/AIDS and its devastating effects can reduce the stigma associated with the disease. Countries where significant progress has been achieved in slowing down the spread of the epidemic offer useful lessons, in particular on how to mobilize and involve men. Men living with HIV/AIDS and men who are political leaders, community and faith leaders, musicians, football stars, among others, have led the way in speaking out about the epidemic.[45]

56. The pandemic involves huge costs for society that could be reduced by involving men and boys in the fight against HIV/AIDS. The private sector has suffered losses due to the disease and many companies now invest in education, awareness-raising, support and counselling programmes. Lessons have been learned from private sector approaches to reproductive health which can offer models for involving men in the campaign against HIV/AIDS.[46]

III. Recommendations for action

57. **Men in many contexts, through their roles in the home, the community and at the national level, have the potential to bring about change in attitudes, roles, relationships and access to resources and decision-making which are critical for equality between women and men. In their relationships as fathers, brothers, husbands and friends, the attitudes and values of men and boys impact directly on the women and girls around them. Men should therefore be actively involved in developing and implementing legislation and policies to foster gender equality, and in providing positive role models to promote gender equality in the family, the workplace and in society at large.**

58. **Where men are key decision makers and holders of economic and organizational power and public resources, they can facilitate gender-responsive policy reform and support laws designed to protect the rights of women and children. Men and boys can play a crucial role in combating HIV/AIDS and violence against women; in achieving gender equality in the workplace and the labour market; and in promoting the sharing of family responsibilities, including domestic work and care of children, and older, disabled and sick family members.**

59. **The Commission on the Status of Women may wish to transmit the report of the Secretary-General, through the Economic and Social Council, to the World Health Organization, the International Labour Conference and the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, as well as to the Programme Coordinating Board of UNAIDS.**

60. **The Commission may wish to consider recommending the following actions towards fully involving men and boys.**

A. Socialization and education of boys and young men

61. **Governments at all levels, international organizations including the United Nations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, the media and other stakeholders should, as appropriate, take the following actions:**

(a) **Promote gender equality as a critical educational goal and outcome, alongside literacy and numeracy;**

(b) **Carry out critical reviews of school curricula, textbooks, television programmes and other educational materials at all levels, in order to eliminate gender stereotypes and strengthen ways of promoting gender equality that engage boys as well as girls;**

(c) **Undertake research on ways and means to promote changes in the attitudes and behaviour of men and boys regarding gender equality, in different social and cultural contexts, taking into account factors that reinforce unequal gender power relations;**

(d) **Develop programmes for teachers, administrative staff and other groups dealing with children and youth (for example, health and social service professionals and police), to promote ways to engage boys and young men in promoting gender equality;**

(e) Include in parent education programmes information on ways and means to rear children in a gender-equitable manner, building on existing materials and strategies;

(f) Develop programmes in schools and community contexts to provide boys and male youth with skills required for caring roles and domestic work;

(g) Develop training programmes for journalists and other media actors on the importance of the non-stereotypical portrayal of women and men and boys and girls;

(h) Encourage the transmission of positive messages on masculinities through the Internet, particularly targeted to youth and including issues of non-violence, participation in domestic work, child-rearing and household tasks and caregiving;

(i) Encourage sports groups to promote positive attitudes to gender equality and non-stereotypical male role models;

(j) Encourage the police forces and the military to promote gender equality and positive male role models through their formal and informal education processes, building on existing initiatives, such as those to prevent HIV/AIDS and gender-based violence in some armed forces;

(k) Carry out impact evaluations of efforts undertaken in schools, workplaces, the media, sport groups and the military to engage boys and men in promoting gender equality, taking into account local contexts, and use the results of the evaluations to compile and widely disseminate good practices.

B. The role of men in the workplace and the labour market, and in sharing family responsibilities

62. **Governments at all levels, international organizations including the United Nations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, trade unions, the media and other stakeholders should, as appropriate, take the following actions:**

(a) Adopt and implement legislative, regulatory and administrative measures to reduce occupational sex segregation, in both the public and the private sectors;

(b) Adopt and implement legislation and policies to close the pay gap between women and men;

(c) Adopt and implement labour laws that are family-friendly (length of workday, accommodation for mobile workers, etc.);

(d) Develop organizational policies that promote gender-sensitive values and practices and enforced sexual harassment policies, promotion of competencies on gender equality in the workplace for all staff and dissemination of good practices;

(e) Review workplace policies for the ways they create incentives or disincentives for gender equality;

(f) Promote, including in partnerships between trade unions and employers, zero tolerance for gender-based violence and sexual harassment against both women and men at work;

(g) Carry out research on male identities and men's perceptions of appropriate male behaviour and their support for gender equality in the workplace;

(h) Support skills programmes for male youth at the point of transition from school to work, especially male youth with limited educational qualifications, in order to expand opportunities for non-traditional careers and encourage them to adopt gender-sensitive relationships, including in the workplace;

(i) Develop education and support programmes, in response to economic crisis, that support men in coping with unemployment in gender-equitable ways;

(j) Encourage the increased training and recruitment of men in caregiving occupations and early childhood education;

(k) Put in place and encourage men to take advantage of family-friendly employment policies, such as parental leave, part-time work and flexible work hours, including by creating disincentives for employers to demand overtime work;

(l) Introduce or expand parental leave policies for both men and women;

(m) Review national family law to ensure that it does not pose obstacles for men to play an active role in the lives of children and dependants;

(n) Create education programmes that develop awareness, knowledge and skills among men, including young and unmarried men, on their roles as parents or future parents and other responsibilities in the family;

(o) Develop and implement measures to increase the involvement of young fathers in the support and care of their children through programmes and schedules that facilitate care work by young fathers without breaks in study and through health services targeted to young fathers on pregnancy and early childhood;

(p) Carry out research on women's and men's patterns of sharing family responsibilities, including men's differentiated use of parental leave and flexible employment provisions and the impact of fathers' involvement, both on the children and on the their own lives;

(q) Encourage and support men in leadership positions in private and public organizations to serve as role models and endorse gender equality in their workplaces;

(r) Encourage organizations, including trade unions, to address the gap between women and men in the representation and sharing of leadership positions in their organizations;

(s) **Encourage the mass media to communicate messages that actively promote more gender-equitable relations between women and men both in the workplace and in the family.**

C. The role of men and boys in caregiving

63. **Governments at all levels, international organizations including the United Nations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, the media and other stakeholders should, as appropriate, take the following actions:**

(a) **Develop campaigns that aim to remove stigma and cultural barriers that currently prevent certain groups of men and boys from caring for and supporting older, disabled and sick persons, in both the formal and the informal health sector;**

(b) **Develop campaigns, involving the media and prominent men as positive male role models, to increase men's involvement in HIV/AIDS care and support activities;**

(c) **Encourage health service providers and other actors in the health sector to portray men and boys as resources for the care and support of older, disabled and sick persons, and to recruit more men in this work;**

(d) **Build confidence and skills of men and boys, including through training and education, to enable them to fully participate in the care and support of older, disabled and sick persons;**

(e) **Develop training curricula for teacher training colleges, social work programmes and nursing programmes to encourage men's involvement in HIV/AIDS care and support activities in both the formal and the informal health sector;**

(f) **Encourage men to support women's full participation in programmes designed to prevent mother-to-child transmission and promote formula feeding by HIV-positive women;**

(g) **Carry out research to identify the gender differences in caregiving and its differentiated impact on women and men and families;**

(h) **Undertake evaluations of the efficacy of initiatives aimed at increasing the involvement of men and boys in care and support, and use the results to compile and disseminate widely examples of good practice.**

D. Combating HIV/AIDS through the involvement of men and boys

64. **Governments at all levels, international organizations including the United Nations, non-governmental organizations, civil society, the private sector, the media and other stakeholders should, as appropriate, take the following actions:**

(a) **Encourage the media, theatre groups, advisory and information services and male peer groups to expand awareness of HIV/AIDS and sensitize men, male adolescents and boys on the implications of male attitudes and sexual behaviour on the spread of HIV/AIDS;**

(b) Develop information campaigns that use a lifestyle social marketing component and build on aspects of youth culture, including the Internet, to reach out to adolescent boys and young men;

(c) Identify and fully utilize contexts in which a large number of men can be reached with HIV/AIDS prevention messages, at relatively little cost, including the police and armed forces, prisons, industries and sports associations;

(d) Include gender perspectives, particularly on gender-based violence, in the training curriculum of the police, military, judges and prosecutors;

(e) Mobilize and involve men in leadership positions, including political leaders, community and faith leaders, musicians, football stars and men living with HIV/AIDS, to show leadership in addressing the root causes of HIV/AIDS;

(f) Establish, in communities, schools and the workplace, opportunities for open discussions about HIV/AIDS that encourage men and women and boys and girls to talk about the sensitive issues surrounding HIV/AIDS;

(g) Initiate public debate on violence against women in the context of HIV/AIDS, utilizing media and information and communication technology, and ensuring the involvement of boys and young men;

(h) Build the capacity of Governments and civil society to develop public education, community mobilization and service provision strategies that address men and boys in the multiple roles they play in relation to sexual violence and abuse, as perpetrators, as witnesses and bystanders, and as support providers;

(i) Promote and establish paid-work patterns that do not separate male workers from their families for prolonged periods of time, or ensure access to family accommodation close to the workplace;

(j) Advocate men's condom use, using diverse media such as television soap operas, advertising campaigns and other forums, as a means of preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS, and make condoms widely available to men and boys, as well as women and girls;

(k) Sensitize and build capacity of male staff in health services, including by provision of in-service training, to enable them to serve as positive role models in promoting sexual and reproductive health, including through HIV/AIDS awareness, for both women and men;

(l) Encourage schools and teachers' unions to serve as catalysts for HIV/AIDS prevention activities, and use formal and informal channels of education to reach out to boys who are not in the formal system of education;

(m) Ensure men's participation in reproductive and sexual health services provided, including HIV/AIDS-related programmes and services, antenatal care and childcare programmes;

(n) Identify and develop indicators of success on involving men and boys in promoting gender equality, including by measuring changes in reduced rates of HIV and sexually transmitted infections and violence against women, and

use those indicators to document the effectiveness of initiatives that promote male involvement;

(o) **Identify and support the monitoring and evaluation of work at different levels to promote men's involvement in HIV/AIDS-prevention activities in order to identify good practice for replication in other contexts.**

Notes

[1] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, para. 1.

[2] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1996, Supplement No. 6* (E/1996/26), chap. I.C.1, agreed conclusions 1996/3.

[3] General Assembly resolution S-23/3.

[4] An overview of recommendations is available at: www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/men-boys2003/language.pdf.

[5] *Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5-13 September 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XIII.18), chap. I, resolution 1, annex, para. 4.27.

[6] United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, The Role of Men and Boys in Achieving Gender Equality. Report of the Expert Group meeting from 21 to 24 October 2003, Brasilia (hereafter "United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (2003)").

[7] Masculinity and male gender identity can be defined as a set of attributes, values, functions and behaviour that are considered normal characteristics of men in a given culture. The concept differs from one society to another, depending on the sociocultural situation.

[8] BRIDGE, *Gender and HIV/AIDS, Overview report* (Sussex, England, Institute for Development Studies, (2002)).

[9] S. C. White, Making men an issue: gender planning for "the other half", in: M. McDonald, ed., *Gender planning in development agencies: Meeting the challenge* (Oxford, Oxfam, 1994), p. 108.

[10] R. W. Connell, The Role of Men and Boys in Achieving Gender Equality. Working paper presented at the expert group meeting on the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality, held in Brasilia from 21 to 24 October 2003.

[11] United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, 2003.

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[13] United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), Partners in Change: Working with men to end gender-based violence (Santo Domingo, 2002); and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Male roles, masculinities and violence: A culture of peace perspective*. I. Breines, R. W. Connell and I. Eide (eds.) (Paris, 2000).

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[15] See Report of the Commission on the Status of Women on its forty-first session, *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1997, Supplement No. 7* (E/1997/7), chap. I.C.1, agreed conclusions 1997/4, Education and training of women.

[16] R. W. Connell, op. cit., note 10.

[17] INSTRAW, op. cit., note 13.

[18] United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, 2003.

[19] Norma Fuller, Work and Masculinity among Peruvian Urban Men. Paper presented at the expert group meeting on the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality, held in Brasilia from 21 to 24 October 2003.

[20] International Labour Office, The role of men and boys in the fight against HIV/AIDS in the world of work. Preliminary issues paper presented at the expert group meeting on the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality, held in Brasilia from 21 to 24 October 2003.

[21] Linden Lewis, Gender Tension and Change in the Contemporary Caribbean. Paper presented at the expert group meeting on the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality, held in Brasilia from 21 to 24 October 2003.

[22] James Lang, Evolving the Gender Agenda: Men, Gender and Development Organizations. Paper presented at the expert group meeting on the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality, held in Brasilia from 21 to 24 October 2003.

[23] R. W. Connell, op. cit., note 10.

[24] The Men and Women: Who Looks After the Children? Report on a series of three seminars hosted at the House of Commons, United Kingdom, by the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Fawcett Society and Fathers Direct (2002).

[25] Lars Jalmert, The Role of Men and Boys in Achieving Gender Equality: Some Swedish and Scandinavian Experiences. Paper presented at the expert group meeting on the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality, held in Brasilia from 21 to 24 October 2003.

[26] UNICEF, op. cit, note 12.

[27] United Nations Population Fund, It takes 2: Partnering With Men in Reproductive and Sexual Health. Programme advisory note, New York, 2003.

[28] The Men and Women, op. cit., note 24; and R. W. Connell, op. cit., note 10.

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[31] Dean Peacock, Men as Partners: Promoting Men's Involvement in Care and Support Activities for People Living with HIV/AIDS. Paper presented at the expert group meeting on the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality, held in Brasilia from 21 to 24 October 2003.

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[34] United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women; The HIV/AIDS Pandemic and its Gender Implications. Report of the expert group meeting held at Windhoek from 13 to 17 November 2000.

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[39] International Labour Office, op. cit., note 20.

[40] Ibid.

[41] United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, 2003.

[42] G. Gordon with A. Welbourn. Stepping Stones: Highlighting Male Involvement in a Gender and HIV/AIDS Training Package, in *Involving Men to Address Gender Inequities: Three Case Studies* (Washington, D.C., USAID Interagency Gender Working Group, Subcommittee on Men and Reproductive Health, 2003), chap. 3.

[43] Dean Peacock, op. cit., note 31; and UNAIDS, World AIDS Campaign 2001: Men as caregivers and fathers in a world with AIDS.

[44] Gary Barker, How Do We Know if Men Have Changed? Promoting and Measuring Attitude Change with Young Men. Lessons from Project H in Latin America. Paper presented at the expert group meeting on the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality, held in Brasilia from 21 to 24 October 2003.

[45] See, for example, Njoki Wainaina, op. cit., note 37.

[46] A. Pramualratana and B. Rau, HIV/AIDS Programs in Private Sector Businesses, Thailand Business Coalition on AIDS, presented at the Third Asia Development Forum, 12 June 2001, Bangkok; and Njoki Wainaina, op. cit., note 37.